

LETTER

To the REVEREND

Mr. JOSHUA GEE,

In Answer to His

OF

June 3. 1743.

Address'd to the REVEREND

Mr. *Nathanael Eells,*

Moderator of the late Convention of Pastors

in *Boston.*

By Benjamin Prescott, A. M.

Pastor of a Church of CHRIST in Salem.

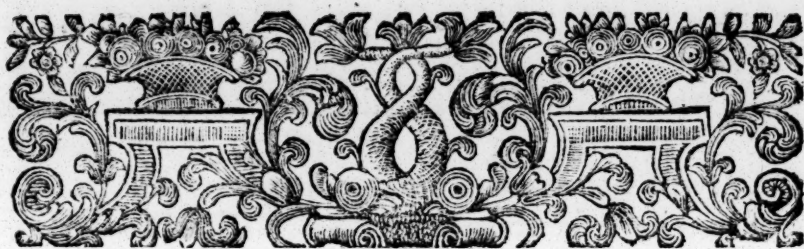
Gal. 2. 11. *But when Peter was come to Antioch, I withstood him to the Face, because he was to be blamed.*

Verse 13. *And the other Jews dissembled likewise with him, insomuch that Barnabas also was carryed away with their Dissimulation.*

Quum Carpuntur vitia, & indè Scandalum oritur, Ille ipse Scandali causa est, Qui fecit quod argui debet, non ille qui arguit.
BERNARD.

BOSTON, Printed by GREEN, BUSHELL, and ALLEN.
for SAMUEL ELIOT in Cornhil. 1743.





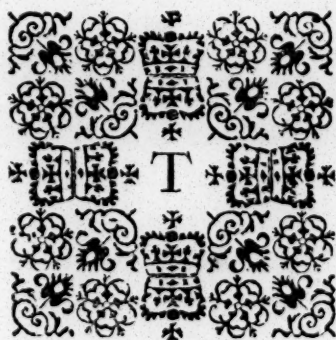
A
L E T T E R

To the REVEREND

Mr. *Joshua Gee.*



Rev. Sir.



HIS Week fell into my Hands
Your's of *June 3. 1743.* to the
Rev. Mr. *Eells*, Moderator of the
late Convention of Pastors in *Boston*;
and I can't but express my Grief,
that a Gentleman of your Wisdom
and Piety should have taken occasi-
on from the Testimony upon which
you remark, to write and make
publick such a Letter, as upon reading I find your's to be.

You know, Rev. Sir, I was present at the Convention,
and one of the Committee who form'd that Testimony.
I am therefore not only knowing as to the Testimony it
self, but also as to the Proceeding of the Convention in
Reference

Reference thereto, and the declared Reasons upon which they acted.

By all which I hold my self the better qualified to make some Reply to your Letter, and having tho't proper to do this, 'twill I trust need no Apology, whilst, after the Pattern you have set, I do it in this publick Manner.

I assure you, Sir, upon the best Consideration and Recollection I can use, I am unable to discern, That either by the Testimony it self, or the Proceedings of the Convention in Reference thereto, there is any just Occasion given you to write as you have done.

I well remember at some Junctures, that perfect Order was not preserv'd in the Debates, which is ever becoming such a Convention. But as to the Emotion of the Passions, I observ'd it in none so much as in your self, on occasion of Dr. *Chauncy's* moving to the Moderator, when you rose up to speak, That the Question might be put to you, Whether you desired to speak as a Member of this Convention? Observing that some Years ago, you had formally withdrawn your self from us, and that therefore it was proper we should know whether you was now returned to us. Your Resentment of this appeared very quick and strong, nor could you be prevail'd with to answer this Question, tho' the Doctor's Motion was back'd as reasonable by a Number of others.

I mention this here, because I am disposed charitably to lay some Things contained in your Letter, to the Ruffle your Passions were unhappily put into by this Incidence. Is it possible for me to think your sharp Resentments allay'd when you took your Pen in Hand to write this Letter, whilst I find you running out almost five Pages in Exceptions taken at the Title Page of the Testimony, in which you know the Convention had no Hand, and in which Exceptions you therefore expressly point at Doctor *Chauncy*, who offer'd the Affront you so highly resented.

But Sir, it appears by what you have said, that you yourself was so well acquainted with the Constitution, Business, and End of the Convention, as to be happily guarded against the *Delusion* of this pompous Title Page:
And

And is it not strange, Sir, that you cou'd not suppose that others, at least, in this Province, were as knowing in this Matter as your self, and consequently no more likely to be deluded than you.

But your Fear upon this Head, it seems, arises especially on Account of those that are "at a *great Distance* from us." But surely, if those for whose Good the Testimony was formed, were in no Danger of being deluded by this Title Page, or induced from it to conceive, that the Determinations of the Convention (according to the Constitution of the Churches in this Province) are to be regarded as carrying some special Power and Authority with them, like that of a provincial Synod; ----- 'Tis not of so great Importance how Persons at a *great Distance* take up the Matter. And yet, I should think sufficient Light hath been held forth to give all Men who will enquire after it, a proper View of the Constitution of these Churches. Could you flatter yourself, that your Account in this Letter would take a greater Spread, or be received with greater Credit and Authority than our *Platform, Ratio Disciplinae*, &c. And so be of more avail for the letting all at a great Distance from us into right Conceptions of the Constitution of these Churches?

But I find, Sir, there is another Danger that has roused your Fear, *viz.* Lest the Reader should be led by this Title Page into a false Judgment upon a very important Fact, namely, That none but such as are Pastors of the Churches in the Province of the *Massachusetts-Bay*, were admitted to vote in the late Convention, whereas 'tis well known that others were admitted to vote, who are Pastors beyond the Bounds of this Province.

'Tis readily granted, that 'tis well known that Pastors beyond the Bounds of this Province were admitted to vote. But suppose any who read this Testimony should be ignorant of this, and take it for granted, that none but Pastors of Churches in the *Massachusetts-Bay* voted it: Would it make any essential Difference as to the Regard due to it, if they should after be inform'd, that some of the Pastors that voted it, belong'd to the neighbouring Governments?

There

There is not a Pastor in this Province that I know of, that ever entertain'd a Thought but that the Vote of a Pastor of the neighbouring Governments gave as much to this Testimony as his own.

You " freely own that formerly, while our Conventions acted and would be consider'd as purely occasional Assemblies of Pastors, the Ministers of neighbouring Colonies and Provinces were gladly admitted to act with them ". And that there was good Reason for it, &c.

And Sir, since we are still professedly to be consider'd in the same Character and as attending and pursuing the same important Purposes, why should not the Pastors of neighbouring Governments be as gladly admitted to act with us now as formerly ?

What valuable End did you expect to answer by raising Exceptions against their voting with us at this Convention ? Why truly it appears by what follows, that your Aim herein is to fix it upon Dr. *Chauncy*, That he has made out a Title-Page with which this Usage is inconsistent. But I am apt to think this Inconsistency will appear to none but yourself, and those that put on your Glasses. For after all, the Convention was at *Boston* in the *Massachusetts-Bay*, the Body of the Ministers present were Pastors of Churches in this Province, and the Number of these so great as that without the least Inconsistency with Truth, and with a manifest Propriety, the Convention ought to take its Denomination from them, tho' according to the known Custom, they gladly admitted a few Pastors of neighbouring Governments to act with them.

And hence it was, that in Draughting the Testimony, the Committee naturally, and without any design to *delude*, run into this Stile, *viz.* " We the Pastors of the Churches of Christ in the Province of the *Massachusetts-Bay* in *New-England*, at our annual Convention, *May* 25. 1743. Tho' this was repeatedly read, yet neither yourself, nor any one else that I know of, was sagacious enough to spy the Danger of Persons being led into a false Judgment hereby. And was it not natural, yea, in some
Sense

Sense necessary, since the Convention themselves used this Stile, that Dr. *Chauncy* in his Title-Page should use it too ?

To avoid your Censure upon him as chusing to publish the Testimony with a *pompous* and *delusive* Title-Page, would you have had him consider'd, that truly there were Pastors present who were of the neighbouring Governments, and therefore corrected the Stile of the Convention, and said----The Testimony of the Pastors of the Churches of the *Massachusetts-Bay*, *New-Hampshire*, and *Rhode-Island*, at their annual Convention, &c. ? I appeal to your self, *Sir*, whether this would have appeared to you, less *pompous* and *delusive*.

But I beseech you, *Sir*, What do you mean by expressing your self as you do, whilst you say, in the above recited Paragraph, " Formerly, while our Conventions acted and would be considered as purely occasional Assemblies of Pastors "-----and " while the whole Body was to be considered only as a Body of wise and good Men, voluntarily assembled on such an anniversary Occasion " &c. Do you mean to suggest, that 'tis now otherwise than it was formerly ?

And why do you advance the Supposition, " If the Majority in the last Vote (which occasioned such Debates about the late Revival of Religion) was determined by them who are not Pastors of this Province " ? Did not you see the Danger ? And is it not strange that you who profess such a Zeal to set Things in a true Light, and to prevent Persons being led into a false Judgment upon Matters of Fact, should leave Persons, especially those at a *great Distance*, to the Hazard of making a wrong Judgment relating to Facts referred to by these Expressions ? Did you not know, if you did not, why did you not inform yourself of the Number of the Pastors of neighbouring Governments present at this Convention ? I can tell you, upon good Information, there was but Six of neighbouring Governments present, and not more than Two of them gave their Vote.

From

From whence it appears, That the Majority of the last Vote, was so far from being determin'd by them who are not Pastors of this Province, that it would have been greater had there been none of the neighbouring Governments present.

Now, *Sir*, Who can doubt but that you are right in your Guess, when you say, " your Meaning in what you have now said, may perhaps appear in a stronger Light hereafter " ? For who can help concluding, that your Meaning in the Expressions I have remark'd, as well as by that following, *viz.* " If the Vote on the last Paragraph was the executing the Designs of a Party, " which I seriously profess to you I know of no Reason for, from any Thing that occurred to my Observation in the Convention : I say who can help concluding, that your Meaning in these Expressions, is to abuse your unwary Readers with groundless and injurious Suggestions. But whether this be your Meaning or no, your Expressions have a manifest and strong Tendency hereto.

But I pass on to observe, That in your next Paragraph Page 7. you appeal not only to the Rev. Moderator, but to all that have at Heart, and have been well acquainted with the State of Religion in this Land for several Years past, whether this Testimony of the late Convention taken in the full View of it, is likely to have a good Effect for the Revival and Advancement of real, vital and practical Religion ? I know not whether you will allow me to be in the Number of those to whom you appeal. For I am one that voted the Testimony : And by the Run of your Letter a just Doubt may be raised, whether you will allow any of them to have at Heart the State of Religion ; and besides I have not been acquainted therewith, by being present at the religious Commotions that have for several Years past been the main Subject of Conversation in the Land. These Commotions have not been found in my Parish, nor has the Zeal and Charity of those who have been the chief Promoters of them, ever prompted them to make any Attempts amongst my People, nor ever to my Face or behind my Back, done or said any Thing to
or

or of me that has drawn my Resentments ; that I have never experienc'd the Temptation which personal Affronts often involve Men in. Yea further, I have never 'till this Time, taken my Pen in Hand to write any Thing upon this Head, having been grieved to see so many Controversies about religious Matters entred upon and pursued in the weekly Prints, as well as distinct Pamphlets spread amongst us. And having had no Hand in any of these, I have not been so much exposed, as those that have, to that Bias which insensibly and almost irresistably is in this Way brought upon Men's Minds. And being under these Advantages I have endeavoured to preserve my Mind calm, have bore it in my Mind that I have two Ears, and whilst I live upon a great Road, and my House is at least as much frequented, I suppose, by Persons of all Characters, and from all Parts of the Land, as any Minister's House in the Province, I have endeavoured with Caution to receive the Accounts given me, and not to rely upon any Facts without sufficient and incontestible Evidence.

And under these Circumstances, I am perhaps as capable (abating the greater Defects found in the Powers of my Mind) of making a just and safe Judgment upon the State of Religion in this Land, as any that have been most conversant in those Places where these religious Commotions have most prevailed. However, after all I know not whether you will allow me to be one to whom you make your Appeal. But be that as it will, I shall, before I have done, endeavour to set the Testimony of the Convention in a just (if not a full) View, in hopes it may prove of some Advantage to those to whom you do appeal, in order to their forming a proper Judgment. And in the mean Time I shall briefly consider the Judgment you yourself have summ'd up, together with the Reasons you offer to support it, and the charitable Labour you take to prevent or correct the bad Effects of the printed Testimony.

Your Judgment we have in these Words. “ I freely declare this to be my Judgment, That if we consider it

in the Whole, as a Testimony against Errors and Disorders, it powerfully tends to unhappy Effects, both among them who live at a *great Distance* from us, and among our own Churches. ”

I would here observe, that you seem to aim at expressing yourself with Caution, but what the Caution is or what the Emphasis you would have put upon the Words you distinguish by Italic Characters, viz. *in the Whole as a Testimony against Errors and Disorders*, I am not able to divine, for excepting the concluding Paragraph it is *ex professo*, even the Whole of it, not only a Testimony against Errors and Disorders, but against such Errors and Disorders as have of late obtained in various Parts of the Land. Nor do I know of any other possible Light in which it can be consider'd. And when I call to mind how generally the several Articles in this Testimony were voted, and how freely those few that did not see cause to vote declared that they did not object to them, but could freely hold up their Hands and vote for every Article, only with this Proviso, that a more enlarged Testimony for the Good Work going on in the Land, (as 'tis usually styled) should be added at the Close ; 'tis a Mystery to me how any can think that the publishing this Testimony should *powerfully* tend to unhappy Effects. If it was the unanimous Thought of the Convention, as I think evidently appear'd to be the Case, that the Things pointed at as Errors and Disorders were really so, and that they obtained in various Parts of the Land, what imaginable Reason can be assigned, why the Pastors of these Churches, thro' Fear of some bad Effects of it, should decline bearing their Testimony against them ? Are they not set upon the Watch-Tower, ? And don't it behove them, as they would approve themselves faithful to God and the Souls of their People, whenever they spy approaching Dangers to sound an alarm ?

And what *powerful* Tendency to bad Effects could their faithfully doing this, be thought to have ? 'Tis true, I have ocular Demonstration that one very bad Effect has followed hereupon, viz. your writing and publishing this

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Letter. But I assure you, *Sir*, tho' the giving this Testimony has been the occasion hereof, yet I am unable to discern upon the closest Examination, that there is any Thing found therein, or in the Proceedure of those that voted it, that has any causality in it that can in reason be tho't to have any real Influence into the Production of this Effect. And I perswade my self, that when you come to calm Consideration, you will upon Examination find that you were prompted to make this vigorous Stand, not from any Thing found in the Testimony, but from a certain Zeal which, before *that* had a Being, was enkindled in your Breast, and the Breasts of a few others, tho' perhaps heighten'd by some incidental Occurrences at the Convention ; and that it has been rash and inconsiderate in you to imploy this Zeal, or suffer it to break out as you have, against the Testimony.

However, since you not only give your Judgment that the Testimony *powerfully* tends to unhappy Effects, but point out among whom they will appear, as well as what they are, you will not excuse me, I suppose, if I do not attend to what you say under this Head.

I would therefore observe, that in the first Place you say, it tends to unhappy Effects among them who live at a *great Distance* from us. Will you allow me, *Rev. Sir*, to take it for granted, that mere Nature led in the Method into which you have here cast your Thoughts,-----agreeable to that usual Saying, What lies nearest the Heart will be first upon the Tongue ? If this indeed be the Case, and if you came to the Convention with the Hope and Expectation, that the Pastors of the Churches convened should apply themselves to the Adjustment of certain Jarrs, which it seems have arisen upon the differing Accounts some particular Persons have given to their Correspondents in *Scotland*, of the State of Religion among us ; or that they by a more hidden Influence would be drawn in so to act, as to serve the private Designs of either Party, 'tis no wonder you met with Disappointment. What tho' some few Gentlemen, to the Number of three or four perhaps on each Side, in giving these Accounts have in-

indulg'd themselves some in the Use of the Panigyrick, some the Satyrick Stile, according to their differing Turn of Thought, did these Parties produce their respective Letters and apply to the Convention as Umpires in the Case? Or if they had, can any one of a sober Mind think it would have been excusable in them to waste the few Hours they had together in this private party Cause, when the State of their Flocks so pressingly call'd for their close Attention.

Should it be supposed some who have taken upon them to represent the dark Side of the State of Religion among us, have relied upon some Facts not sufficiently vouch'd, or laid more Strefs upon others than they ought, and so have been betray'd into an erroneous Judgment, inasmuch that you might think you have Right freely to pronounce as you do, that their Accounts are false. Can this be deemed a sufficient Reason why the Pastors of these Churches should forbear testifying against such Errors and Disorders as are really obtaining in various Parts of the Land? 'Tis true, upon Sight of this Testimony, Persons at a *great Distance* will have sufficient Reason to believe, that the Errors and Disorders testify'd against are found among us. But by believing this *Truth*, will they be strongly tempted to believe what is *false*? Surely if any can give into so unreasonable a Temptation, not the Convention but themselves must be accountable for it.

But let us a little enquire, what the genuine Effects of this Testimony upon the Minds of such as are at a *great Distance* from us will be. Such will undoubtedly hereby be establish'd in the Belief of the melancholy Account of Errors and Disorders herein given. And this will produce Grief in the Minds of good Men. But will they be grieved at the Information they receive, or at the Errors and Disorders they are inform'd of? Surely the latter. And have we not Reason to expect, that this will excite them to pray to God for us, that he would put a Stop to the Progress of these Errors and Disorders? And however they will be grieved at their obtaining in any Parts of the Land, they will in reason rejoice at it, and have their Faith in Prayer strengthened, whilst they find

find the Watchmen are not asleep, but are using their charitable and faithful Endeavours for their Removal. And are these unhappy Effects?

What if this Testimony should detract something from the Pleasure which good Men, at a *great Distance* from us, have conceived from the exalted Accounts they have received of the flourishing State of Religion among us? It can in Reason no further detract herefrom, than that Pleasure has exceeded due Bounds. And will it be a Grief to them, that their Pleasure is reduced to proper Limits? Will they not rather be grieved when they see your Letter, and thereby find such a Stand made against the Testimony which so powerfully tends to frustrate the pious and charitable Intentions of it, and render it baneful instead of beneficial to those for whom it is designed, when at the same Time 'tis in itself well adapted to serve their best Interest?

And as to the fear " that this printed Testimony will give the Enemies of Religion great Advantage to obstruct the Revival and Progress of vital Christianity ", I see no Foundation for it. I am sensible, that whilst those that profess to have experienced uncommon Degrees of divine Influence upon their Souls, are chargeable with either the Errors or Disorders here testified against, this above all Things gives occasion to the Adversaries of Religion to speak reproachfully. And from a Sense of this, whilst the Convention give their Testimony against Errors and Disorders, they testify also " against the impious Spirit of those that from hence take Occasion to reproach the Work of the divine Spirit in the Hearts of the Children of God ". And what could they have done more to prevent their Testimony's being in this Way abused by unreasonable Men.

But, Sir, let us suppose, that our christian Friends in *Scotland*, who at present have so much at Heart the Revival and Progress of vital Religion as you express it, should have the same Reason that we have to lament and testify against Errors and Disorders obtaining in various Parts of their Land, and according to their Constitution bear a
Testimony

Testimony against them : Would it not be a just Grief and Offence to them, to see any of their Number weakening their Testimony, and labouring to bring their Person's into Contempt, and to raise Prejudices in the Minds of the Populace against them ? Would they not account these Enemies to vital Religion ? And can you hide it from your self, that the Example you here set, has a powerful Tendency (should it be set before them) to stir up and countenance such an opposing Spirit ?

Think not, I beseech you, *Sir*, that the *pompous* Profession you make of Zeal for God, of being faithful to the Doctrines of Grace, and forward to serve the Cause of real and vital Religion among us, will cover and excuse you, whilst you treat your Fathers and Brethren, who have voted this Testimony, in so unchristian a Manner, and who are as able and ready, for ought I know, upon all proper Occasions, to vindicate and promote the Doctrines of Grace, and the Cause of vital Religion, as you are, tho' so happy as to be preserved from that intemperate and misguided Zeal that is enkindled in your Breast, and the Breasts of some few others of the Ministry in the Land.

But I hasten to observe, what you mention as the unhappy Effects to which, in your Judgment, this Testimony *powerfully* tends among our own Churches. And here you say, “ among our selves (I mean the Churches
 “ thro'out this Province and neighbouring Governments)
 “ are there not Multitudes who (as we charitably hope)
 “ have lately experienced a saving Conversion to God ;
 “ who from this *printed Testimony* will be tempted to form
 “ this Judgment,----That the Pastors of the Churches
 “ in this Province are united in their Apprehension, that
 “ there has not been any remarkable Work of God's
 “ Grace among us, which ought to have been thankfully
 “ acknowledged by such an Assembly of Pastors ?
 “ What else can they be tempted to think upon reading
 “ the *printed Testimony*, when they find, that *the Pastors of*
 “ *the Churches in the Province of the Massachusetts-Bay in N.E.*
 “ *at their annual Convention*, have testified only against
 “ some

“ some *Errors* and *Disorders*, without giving any Attestation to a remarkable Revival of Religion in various Parts of this Land? And what will be the Consequence of such a Temptation, if nothing be publickly done to prevent or correct such a false Judgment, GOD only knows. But have we not Reason to fear, that many who have experienc’d a Work of divine Grace, will be tempted to entertain Prejudices against their own Pastors as well as other Ministers? ” Paragraph 9.

I am unable to determine how many you would include within the charitable Hope you speak of. But as to such as have indeed been savingly converted to God, and really experienced a Work of divine Grace, tho’ I am sensible good Men had need with Humility and Fervour to pray to God as Christ hath taught them---*Lead us not into Temptation*, yet whilst they do so, I can see no Reason to fear their being left to make so absurd a Judgment, or take up so ungrounded Prejudices against their own Pastors or other Ministers, as I think you, by a just Construction of this Letter, shew your self forward to instill into their Minds. Can it possibly enter into a Mind that is at Liberty to think calmly, that our testifying against Errors and Disorders, is any Evidence of Unfaithfulness to the Doctrines of Grace? Or any Discovery of an Indisposition to acknowledge any Instances wherein the Glory of those Doctrines are display’d? Don’t you offend against the Generation of the Upright in advancing the Supposition, that they will be prejudiced against their Pastors because they bear a Testimony against the Errors and Disorders, which on all Hands are confessedly found among us, and have a threatening Aspect upon our Churches? I say found among us, *i. e.* in this Province and the neighbouring Governments, as you have well explain’d the Phrase, and in which extensive Sense the Expression also in the Testimony *various Parts of our Land*, ought justly to be interpreted.

And, *Rev. Sir*, I charitably Hope, that every true Child of God will be preserved from those very bad Effects,
which

which the Temptation administred, not by the Testimony, but your Letter, is so artfully adopted to produce.

Will not all to whom Christ has given to eat of the *hidden* Manna, or to whom is given the white Stone, and in the Stone a new Name written, which no Man knoweth saving he that receiveth it, take an abundant Satisfaction in the inestimable Gift which thro' divine Grace they have received? Will they suffer their Passions to be ruffled, and admit into their Minds such unchristian Prejudices as you suggest, meerly because others will not join in giving a plump Testimony to what none but themselves can know? Will it not be enough if really their Life is hid with Christ in God, tho' they should fail of the Name and of being applauded as the peculiar Favourites of Heaven? Is it possible that the having this Name should be esteemed by them of light Importance, since the Amen, the faithful and true Witness, has assured us, that Persons may have a Name to live when they are really dead?

How far you could with Truth represent in this Paragraph, that the Convention have testify'd only against some Errors and Disorders, without *any* Attestation to a remarkable Revival of Religion in various Parts of the Land, I shall in due Place consider.

And now proceed to observe, what you offer for the Prevention or Correction of these bad Effects of the printed Testimony. And here you say, "You judge it necessary the Publick should know, and would have it published as undeniable Matter of Fact, (1.) That scarce one third Part of the Pastors of the Churches of the *Massachusetts-Bay* were present at the late Convention. (2.) That of those who were present, it was but a small Majority that voted the last Article or Paragraph, which caused such Debates about an Attestation to the Work of God's Grace appearing of late Years in a remarkable Revival of Religion among these Churches." And thereupon represent the whole Number of Ministers present, to be at least 70, and that 38 was the precise Number who voted in the affirmative. And thereupon you appeal to the Moderator, and say, "you are persuaded he will at any

any Time be ready to attest to the Truth hereof." But, Sir, don't you know that it would have been as just a Representation for you to have said, (1.) That the late Convention was as full an one as has been seen for many Years. (2.) That all the Articles in this Testimony referring to Errors and Disorders, appear'd in all the Debates, to contain nothing but what was agreeable to the Sentiments of all that were present, and were pass'd by a very general Vote. And altho' in the concluding Paragraph the Vote was not so full, yet upon Observation, there appear'd to me a very manifest Majority in it, in-somuch that tho' I do not remember I said any Thing upon it, yet I wonder'd any Doubt arose whether it was a Vote. And I am inclin'd to think the Moderator will not be so ready to give his Attestation, that there were but 38 that held up their Hands for it, as you seem to imagine. For the Question to be decided was, whether it was a Vote. And when the Moderator in a cursory Manner had counted Hands (it having been remark'd that about 70 were present) to the Number of 38, he declar'd it was a Vote. But I cannot think he is prepared with any safety to attest that was the precise Number.

But be this as it will, I have no Disposition to contest the Matter. And I should be loath to detract from your charitable Attempt to skreen as many as possible of the Ministers of the Province, from that unrighteous Judgment, and ungrounded Prejudices, which you endeavour to influence those included in your charitable Hope, to form and take up against those that voted this Testimony. But I doubt the Labour you take to bring off the Rev. Dr. *Sewall*, will, to the discerning Reader, be found deficient. For according to your own Account, what you relate of the Doctor's Exceptions, was against the Testimony as it stood before it was reviewed by the Committee enlarged. To the Purpose then that you make Pretence of, you should in all Reason have related something that the Doctor advanced against the Testimony as it stood when last brought to the Convention. For however he,

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who was prevented sitting with the Committee at the first draughting the Testimony, on the sudden offer'd his Thoughts as became a Gentleman of his Piety and Uprightness, yet since he sat with them when it was review'd, if after this Review, when it was alter'd and enlarged in divers Places, you had nothing to produce to shew that he was yet dissatisfied with it, 'twill be most natural to presume that finally he was satisfied with it ; and so to suspect that what you rehearse from him, is rehears'd for some other Purposes than meerly to skreen him from that Odium you would fix upon others ; and for the Prevention or Correction whereof you have not it seems so much as one Word to offer.

I beseech you *Sir*, calmly to consider, whether it will not appear very strange, especially to those that are at a *great Distance* from us, That you should not so much as attempt to suggest any thing by Way of Excuse for the unhappy Conduct of the thirty eight Ministers, that have been so vile as to vote this Testimony ? You may perhaps think you have been very modest, in only making mention of Prejudices, without adding what the Prejudices are, that those who have experienced a Work of divine Grace, will be tempted by this Testimony, to entertain against their own Pastors, as well as other Ministers. But this Omission, you might justly think, could be supply'd by a more private Instruction. And yet 'tis to be observed, that you could not wholly rest so important a Matter here, but broadly suggest, P. 13. That those that wou'd recommend themselves to you as serious Christians, must take up this Prejudice against their Pastors that have voted this Testimony, That they are unfaithful Ministers. This you suggest, not only by telling, “ That
 “ a great Number of Pastors of Churches did not think
 “ they should be faithful to the Doctrines of Grace, and
 “ serve the Cause of real vital Religion, if they voted this
 “ Testimony ” as it stands : But also by your strange Way of arguing in the next Paragraph ; where not content with this neither, you represent them as treating this great Number of faithful Pastors with Rudeness and Contempt,

tempt, and offering nothing in reply to these Friends to the Cause of Truth and Holiness, but Clamour and Opposition.

And now, *Sir*, I am sadly sensible, That to some who will rely upon your Representation, the Way is made broad and paved, for their distinguishing themselves by their Zeal in censuring the Voters of this Testimony, as unfaithful Ministers, Enemies to the Doctrines of Grace, such as disserve the Cause of real vital Religion, and of consequence, such as have never experienc'd a Work of divine Grace, but are in an unconverted Estate.

Such Censures as these have been pass'd by some Itinerants, who have sufficiently prov'd themselves raw elated Novices; but it grieves me to find this unchristian Temper and Practice countenanc'd and patronis'd by one, whom I truly esteem a Person of sound Knowledge and Piety: What will not an intemperate and misguided Zeal drive Men into, even good Men sometimes?

Suffer me now, *Rev. Sir*, before I conclude my long Epistle, to put you in Mind of what you might have said, and which I am no ways able to excuse you for omitting to say, in order to the Prevention or Correction of those unhappy Effects you have spoken of. And in doing this I shall endeavour, as I have promised, to set the Testimony in a just View.

And in the first Place I would observe, That upon the Motion of some Members of the Convention, that they would take into Consideration and give their Advice upon some melancholy Accounts then given, which related to the State of Religion in the Land, and specially in some particular Parts of it; it was tho't proper by some to chuse a Committee to consider and report what might be proper for the Convention to do thereon. Hereupon the following Question was penn'd by the Scribe, the *Rev. Mr. Prince*, viz. Whether we would chuse a Committee to consider of such Errors in Doctrine and Disorders in Practice as had obtained in various Parts of the Land, and what might be proper for the Convention to do in order to their Redress? (or Words to this Effect) Which

Question being put by the Moderator, it pass'd in the Affirmative, *Nemine Contradicente*.

And the Choice of a Committee of seven Persons was immediately proceeded to. Who when met together the next Morning, happily fell into a Draught in which six of them then present unanimously agreed, 'Tis here justly to be remark'd, That the Convention Sermon was preach'd the same Day, and the publick Exercise began at 9 h. A. M. At the Close of which 'twas expected the Committee should make their Report. Which I mention that the judicious and candid Reader may know the short Time the Committee had to form this Testimony in, and make the proper Allowances.

When from the publick Exercise the Convention retired to Dr. Sewall's, the Doctor, who had not sat with the Committee, as has been observed, had but just Time to read over what they had prepared as their Report, before it was called for, and publicly read to the Convention. What the Doctor offered hereupon was back'd by some others, and the Issue was, that three Persons were added to the Committee, and they requested to review it and make Report in the Afternoon. Which Issue was as freely and without Exceptions agreed to by the Committee that had already sat, as any others in the Convention. The Committee thus enlarged by Appointment met at Dr. Sewall's after Dinner, when the Doctor and the Three that were added were present. And as to what had been said of *Arminianism* not being testify'd against, It was observed, That in the Representations made, and upon which this Committee were chosen, there was nothing found to put them in mind of *Arminian* Errors : 'Twas also considered, That we had no Evidence given of the prevailing of these Errors at this Day, in any Parts of the Land, or Disorders upon this Head. And as it could not be expected that this Testimony should be against all Errors, so there did not appear any special Reason why it should be pointed at the Errors of *Arminius*, any more than a Number of other's Errors that had crept into the christian Church : Whereupon this Matter was drop'd,
save

save only that the Word *Arminians* was added after the Word *Pharisees*, in the fifth Article. At this Sitting of the Committee also, these Words were added at the Close of the sixth Article, " At the same Time we bear our
 " Testimony against the impious Spirit of those that from
 " hence [*i. e.* from the Being and Appearing of these
 " Errors and Disorders testify'd against] take occasion to
 " reproach the Work of the divine Spirit in the Hearts of
 " the Children of God." There was also now added those Words in the concluding Paragraph, *viz.* " And
 " were there is any special Revival of pure Religion in
 " any Parts of our Land, we would give unto God all
 " the Glory."

And when the Testimony thus altered and enlarged, was presented to the Convention, it was publicly read, as well as the Scriptures and Passages in the Platform referred to : And tho' hereupon it was moved by some, Whether the Convention were not prepared to vote an Acceptance of the Report ? Yet others tho't it best to consider and vote upon the several Articles contained in it distinctly, which was easily yielded to. Whereupon the Articles referring to Errors in Doctrine and Disorders in Practice, were, in this Manner, with little or no Opposition or Exception, voted by a great Majority. And as this is true in Fact, so 'tis agreeable to your Representation. For, P. 7. you intimate, That it was the last Vote which occasion'd Debates. And P. 13. That the Reason why some did not join in these Votes referring to Errors and Disorders, was because the Testimony was not amended and enlarged by an open Acknowledgment of the late remarkable Effects of a gracious divine Influence in many of our Churches. And you might have added, That some who withheld their Vote upon these Articles, declared they could readily hold up their Hands for every of them, if such an open Acknowledgment had accompany'd them.

But when the concluding Paragraph came to be considered, there was indeed great Exception taken at it, by Persons who had hitherto shewn no Opposition in regard of the foregoing Votes. They urged it as a Duty whilst
 we

we testify'd against Errors and Disorders at this Day, to give a full Testimony to there having been a glorious Work of divine Grace manifested in various Parts of the Land. In reply to this it was said, we trusted we were all disposed to pay suitable Acknowledgment to God, for the Effects of his Grace visible among us: But as to that remarkable Revival of Religion they spake of, it had not been manifest in all Places.-----And since we were an Assembly consisting of Pastors of Churches in various and distant Parts of the Land, they could not in Reason be, and it appeared in fact they were not, prepared to give such a joint Testimony as was urged for.

To this it was pleaded, That we had given a joint Testimony against Errors and Disorders, and yet these did no more than the remarkable Effects of divine Grace appear in all Parts of the Land. And as many rely'd upon the Testimony of others for their Information with respect to those, why could we not as well rely upon their Testimony in regard of the remarkable Revival of Religion? And hereupon several shew'd themselves forward to inform the Convention of what had occur'd in their respective Churches and Parishes, which they thought were demonstrative Evidences of a very remarkable divine Influence. The Rev. Mr. *Webb* gave an enlarged Narrative for this Purpose.

You may remember, *Sir*, how he told us, That there had been in about two Years near two hundred Persons of his Congregation that appear'd to be under very strong Impressions; he told us also the Discoveries they made, that these Impressions, in the Judgment of Charity, must needs be from a remarkable Influence of the Spirit of God, and that not more than ten or a Dozen of this large Number had, as yet, proved themselves false to their Profession: And what Reasons he had to think the rest sound Converts.

When others would have had the Liberty, in their Turn, to make the like Declarations, it was observed, That we had but a short Time, it being now near seven o'Clock, (as I remember) and that it was not in Reason to be tho't that the Convention could need these enlarged Accounts

Accounts, there having been abundant Publication already of these Things. 'Twas said, If the Convention should sit 'till the next Evening or the next Day, continuedly in hearing such Accounts, 'twas not likely there could be any Thing of Importance offered, that had not before reach'd their Ears. And when still they press'd to be heard, and wonder'd their Testimony might not as well be credited, for the remarkable Revival of Religion, as that of others for the obtaining Errors and Disorders---They were told, That equal Credit was given to the Facts related by both ; but there was this essential Difference, That the Facts related on the one Hand, were such as that upon our own Judgment we could safely pronounce them Errors and Disorders, whereas it was not so in Regard of the Facts related on the other. And however these were such as had induced them to judge there had been a remarkable divine Influence upon the Souls of many in their Flocks, yet it was an unreasonable Thing for them to expect that with a full Reliance upon their Judgment, others should join with them in giving a positive Attestation thereto. It was further urged by them, that we should not give that Glory to God which was his due, unless we joined in the publick Acknowledgment of the glorious Work began and carried on in the Land. To which it was replied, That God would certainly have the Glory of his Grace in every Instance wherein it was display'd.--- Every recipient Subject of that Grace would be enlarged to praise him ; where there were any Numbers together in the same Church and Flock, they would unite in praising of him, and 'twas charitably to be concluded, that Mr. *Webb*, for Instance, with his whole Assembly, had offer'd solemn Praise to God for the Revival of Religion they apprehended visible in the Midst of them. But what important Purposes could it serve, for Persons living at a *great Distance* from, and having no Acquaintance with the State of Religion in Mr. *Webb's* Church, to join with him in giving a positive Attestation to such a remarkable Revival of Religion there ?

But

But besides all this, it was urged as a good Reason why we should express our selves with due Caution in the Point under Debate, That since it was manifest those Errors and Disorders testify'd against, were run into by some who had been under the most remarkable Impressions, if the Convention should give so full and enlarged a Testimony for a glorious Work of divine Grace, as that these would be led to apply it to themselves, and take it for granted, that however they might be chargeable with some Errors and Disorders, yet that in the Judgment of the Convention, they had experienc'd that which was an Evidence of a remarkable divine Influence, they would, being establish'd in the main Point, *viz.* the Presence of God's Spirit with them, but little Regard our testifying against Errors and Disorders especially, it having been the Labour of some zealous Teachers, to instruct Men, that where there is a remarkable Work of the Spirit of God, 'tis to be expected there will be great Mixtures of Corruption, Error and Disorder. And that these may break out the more impetuously on occasion of a Work of the Spirit of God upon the same Soul wherein they are found.

And now, *Sir*, having reminded you of what pass'd in the Debates upon this Head, wherein I acknowledge I have not rehearsed the Whole of what was offered, to dissuade from a more full and positive Testimony upon this Head, yet what I have rehearsed was offered, and may serve to give the Reader a proper View of this Matter ; and whereas you say, p. 14. " When no " Amendment that would give a plain Attestation to " the late happy Revival of Religion could be obtain'd, " ---it was then, and not 'till then, that the last Para- " graph was voted. " What is thence to be collected but that those who were satisfied with the Draught, were satisfied upon such Grounds and Reasons as could not be shaken, much less removed by the Exceptions taken at it ? And I would beg you, *Sir*, now to consider, and I leave all Men to judge, how far you have been just to your Brethren, and even to the Truth it self, in representing

presenting it as a "Matter of Fact, That when Pastors of this Province of an established Character as Friends to the Cause of Truth and Holiness, would have testify'd what they knew concerning the late Revival of Religion in various Parts of the Land, they were interrupted in a rude Manner, and treated with open Contempt." ---And that "many earnest Pleas for their being heard were stifled in Clamour and Opposition."

Is it either rational or christian for you, because this last Paragraph was not just agreeable to your Mind, therefore to bend your Endeavours to enervate the Testimony and frustrate the good Intentions of it? And especially for you, to this Purpose, instead of any calm weighing the Testimony it self, to set your self to darken the Characters of those that gave it, and represent their Proceedings in the most disadvantageous Light? Surely, were there the Discoveries of humane Frailty, and were any thro' Inadvertance betray'd into too great Heat of Temper, whence arose any Breach of due Order in the Debates, I think you had reason to lay your Hand upon your own Mouth, for the most, if not the only, remarkable Instance of any Thing of this Nature, before the passing of the last Vote upon the Testimony (if I remember right) was what arose upon your being ask'd the Question, Whether you desired to speak as a Member of the Convention? And which you might have prevented or still'd by saying one Word, and that a Monosyllable too. Your declining to say which, brings it into Doubt, whether you was able to declare you was now returned to the Convention with a Purpose of uniting your self to them, and so whether you did not now appear among us to serve a Turn: And I wish your future Conduct may not strengthen such a Conjecture.

And as to my Rev. Brother, whom you represent as testifying with Warmth of Resentment against the bad Spirit that appeared to prevail in the Assembly, I hope he will be sensible of his Rashness in imputing that to a bad Spirit, which was the Result of sound Reason and solid Principles of Action, as I trust appears by the Facts I have already related.

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But

But I pass to observe, that as you represent it, Page 12. " The Report of the Committee was bro't to the Convention, as a Testimony against several Errors and Disorders, without *any* thankful Acknowledgment of the late Work of GOD's Grace among us." And again, Page 10. " That the Pastors of the Province of the *Masachusetts-Bay* in *New-England*, at their annual Convention, have testify'd *only* against some Errors and Disorders, without giving *any* Attestation to a remarkable Revival of Religion in various Parts of the Land ". I shall not fulfill what I have promised, unless I give the Assertion contained in these Passages a brief Consideration.

Now, *Rev. Sir*, you find the Convention in the concluding Paragraph of the Testimony, expressly paying to the great Shepherd of the Sheep, their " thankful Acknowledgments for his merciful Regard to the Churches of this Country---in advancing his spiritual Kingdom in the Souls of so many from the Foundations of this Country to this Day." Certain it is, that the Grace of our exalted Redeemer has been very illustrious in his Dispensations towards these Churches. And we have abundant Reason to ascribe Blessing and Glory to his Name, for the continued Tokens of his gracious Presence with us, in sanctifying the Means of Grace, which are of his own appointing, to the Conversion of Sinners and Edification of Saints from Time to Time. And as these Tokens of his gracious Presence have been at various particular Seasons more remarkably visible, so how visible soever they have been *of late* in the Midst of us, in the Revival of Religion, yet this is wholly included in what is here very comprehensively express'd. And it can't therefore, I think, be justly said, that the Convention hath not in this Paragraph render'd *any* thankful Acknowledgment herefor.

But you find they have not left the Matter thus generally, but proceeded more particularly to say, " And where there is any special Revival of pure Religion in any Parts of our Land at this Time, we would give unto God all the Glory. " Doth not this carry in it some Acknowledgment

Acknowledgment, that, in some Parts of the Land, there is at this Time a special Revival of pure Religion? What Tho'ts do you entertain of those Pastors that form'd and voted this Paragraph? Have you any Reason to entertain a Suspicion of them, that they will so take God's Name in vain, as to make a solemn Pretension of giving Glory to him for that which in their Tho't has no Existence? Will it appear in any stronger Light, that these Expressions necessarily include some Acknowledgment of a special Revival of Religion at this Time in some Parts of our Land, if I present them in the Form of Addresses to God?

Should you hear any one Pastor in praying to God, say, *Lord, we adore the Riches of thy Grace, in that thou hast taken care of the Churches planted by thee in this Wilderness: And give thee Thanks, that thou hast set up thy Kingdom in the Souls of so many among this thy People, from the Days of our Fore-Fathers 'till this Time: And where thou hast at this Day in any Parts of our Land, in a special and remarkable Manner, revived thy Work, and caused pure and undefiled Religion to flourish, we would humbly say, Not unto us, not unto us, but to thy Name be all the Glory:* Could you possibly upon hearing this, entertain a Tho't, especially if you are acquainted with any remarkable Instances of the Revival of Religion at this Time, that in these Addresses to God there is no thankful Acknowledgment therefor included? Could you possibly entertain this Tho't, I say, without affixing these Things to his Character, *viz.* That he is a Time-server and a Mocker of God? If by the late Work of God's Grace among us, you intend any thing not included in the Expression, *pure Religion*, you are right in saying, that the Testimony is without any thankful Acknowledgment therefor. And I pray God, that all his People may be preserved from ascribing to God, and giving him Thanks for such Things as are unworthy of him.

And it has been a deep Sense of the Danger many are in at this Day, of being overcome by the many and strong Temptations set before them, to run into this very dangerous and sinful Practice, that the Convention have used the

the Caution that appears in this Paragraph. And I had tho't to point out some of those Things, many, at this Day, are in danger of ascribing to God, which are unworthy of him : But find this would protract my Letter to too great a Length.

I shall therefore conclude by saying, -----As to those that are offended at this Caution, 'tis my sincere Wish, they may calmly consider Things, and put on that Charity which envieth not, vaunteth not it self, is not puffed up, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no Evil, believeth all Things, and hopeth all Things. And I pray God, that those who have given this Testimony, my self as well as others, may use, and be preserved in the Use, of the same calm Consideration and Charity.

I am, Rev. and dear Sir,

Salem, June 29.
1743.

Your Brother in the

Gospel-Ministry,

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B. Prescott.



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